

GOOD MORNING TO ALL OF YOU WHO HAVE COME TO PARTICIPATE IN THE 2005 WHITE HOUSE CONFERENCE ON AGING!

ESPECIALLY GOOD MORNING DELEGATES!

On behalf of the Policy Committee, I want to welcome all of you and thank you for your enthusiasm, energy and commitment to be a part of this decennial effort to address the issues that impact the lives of today's and tomorrow's seniors.

The reality, for better or worse, is that we will all age...the graying of America is upon us and our Nation will soon look like the wonderful State of Florida! The question for all of us, and our society, is how can our twilight years be as promising, exciting and rewarding as possible?

Can we make the Fountain of Youth last longer? How can we look forward to being happy? Being healthy? And contributing? What should we do to prepare for and address our longevity? Can we avoid isolation and chronic illnesses? How can we assist those who need our help?

These kinds of questions have been discussed by nearly 150,000 persons throughout this country over the past almost year and a half....about 400 events including 40 Listening Sessions, Solutions Forums and Mini-Conferences, plus hundreds of comments through our website or mail.

From the time that the Policy Committee began its outreach for Solutions at the annual meeting of the Florida Council on Aging in 2004 to the last conversation in the historic city of San Antonio this past September, we have heard what are considered the challenges and opportunities for seniors of today and tomorrow, and we have heard suggested solutions.

Throughout this effort, members of the Policy Committee have worked diligently, and provided thoughtful input. Thank you for all you have done!

The Advisory Committee, under the leadership of Mike McLendon has also been of great counsel, and I am pleased they plan to work with us to continue our efforts beyond the days of this Conference.

The Administration on Aging under the auspices of Assistant Secretary for Aging Josefina Carbonell, whom many of you know, and in particular Deputy Assistant Secretary Edwin Walker have been especially supportive, and I want to publicly thank them.

In several venues over the last year I have been asked: Why have a White House Conference on Aging? Can you make a difference?

I have answered that I believe WE CAN make a difference.

Our conversations will address challenges faced by current seniors AS WELL AS focus on our Conference theme: **“The Booming Dynamics of Aging: From Awareness to Action.”** The theme reflects the demography of our future and the possibilities that lie ahead.

This generation of baby boomers has helped define the character of our nation at every stage of their lives. From our new schools to our diverse political views to our music. And I believe we will continue to define the character of our country, from business to technology to E-bay.

We’ve rejected longstanding social mores and demanded more and better, and gone beyond demanding to inventing and solving.

We’ve spent many years in pursuit of excellence, and there is absolutely no reason to believe that our rejection of convention will give way to acceptance as we hurtle into this next stage of our lives.

And just as it has been at other stages of our lives, it is up to us to revolutionize the way in which this nation’s elders are perceived and embraced.

On January 1, 2006, the first of the baby boomers, born in 1946 will turn 60, and a 60<sup>th</sup> birthday for a boomer will continue to occur every 7.7 seconds for a LONG time!

The 2005 WHCoA has a statutory mandate (that means that Congress TOLD us) to address the issues and interests of aging today and tomorrow, which includes the 78 million baby boomers now aged 39 to 57 – that’s three out of every ten Americans.

By the time the next WHCoA convenes in 2015, the demographic, social and economic challenges that we are talking about today will be well upon us.

At that point in time, the leading edge of the boomers who turned 60 in 2006 will be turning 70, and half of the nation’s baby boomers will be over the age of 60.

What do these demographic changes portend? Well, one possibility was just laid out by David Walker who provided us with a sobering report on the future of an aging America.

I think everyone in this room knows that the sooner we get started, the better it will be for all of us and for our children and grandchildren. So we will start right now....right here. **What we do, starting today, is intended to shape the future.**

Make no mistake, the 2005 White House Conference on Aging **is about the future, a future that is quickly approaching.** This reality makes this

Conference unique...and we can contribute new ideas as to how society and individuals should plan and adapt to the changes that will accompany that future.

Mr. Walker told us that the three key ingredients needed to meet the challenges of the future are **courage, integrity and innovation**. We have to have courage to make tough choices. We must have the integrity to do that which we know in our hearts is right and FAIR...and we must free ourselves from dogmatic shackles and unleash our minds in pursuit of innovative approaches that will make the coming decade a decade of positive aging. We **MUST** work together.

We have the ability through this Conference to impact future political discourse.

The Conference has always been asked to make recommendations to the President and Congress. We are not being asked to resolve policy issues; we are being asked to identify issues that are important to older persons and boomers, to suggest HOW those issues be resolved and to identify WHO else, besides the federal government, can take ownership of the solutions...state, local and tribal governments, business and industry, the non-profit sector, communities, and/or the individual.

I believe, and the Policy and Advisory Committees believes, that our Conference will be a resounding success if we can frame these important issues so that they are accepted by both ends of the political spectrum. That's where our real contribution lies, and the broader that agreement, the more likely the issues will be addressed.

Just like the bi-partisan Policy Committee has done since we first met in July 2004, I know we CAN do this, we can be articulate, share our thoughts and respect each other's opinions.

We can develop fiscally responsible ideas that should be implemented sooner rather than later. We CAN make a difference in the lives of current and future senior Americans.

After all, who really thought that Policy Committee member former Democratic Congresswoman Barbara Kennelly and now Chairman of the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare and I, a former Ronald Reagan – appointed U.S. Commissioner of Social Security could work together in harmony for the last 18 months!

Now, let's look at what we will all be doing over the next three days. As you know, we have based our deliberations on an agenda that has six overarching tracks:

Planning Along the Lifespan  
The Workplace of the Future

Our Community  
 Health and Long Term Living  
 Social Engagement and Civic Engagement  
 Technology and Innovation in an Emerging Boomer/Senior  
 Marketplace

and for purposes of the Conference, a Crosscutting Track that includes issues such as support of informal caregivers and integrated state and local delivery systems needed for 21<sup>st</sup> Century seniors.

These tracks have served as our foundation and helped to shape our conversations throughout the country for nearly 15 months.

And this agenda, together with the input from all of these events, which many of us have had the honor to attend, have helped to shape the resolutions you have before you.

When we finish the work of this Conference, I expect the resolutions we select and the implementation strategies that are developed will help shape the actions and activities of the next ten years and hopefully beyond.

The Policy Committee has gone to great lengths to ensure that many pressing issues that have been presented to us over the past year or more have been in some way included, but we have also reminded ourselves that we cannot tackle every issue.

In fact, we received over 3,000 individual recommendations through the public input process. In the end, through a lively democratic process, we distilled these recommendations into 73 resolutions -- and it is these 73 resolutions that now move to the center of our deliberations.

I remind you again - the resolutions before you are born out of and are representative of the richness and diversity of issues and ideas that make up our great country.

You are now being asked to vote on the 50 resolutions that you believe are the most important for current and future generations of senior citizens and that will best address the challenges that lie ahead.

HOW those challenges can be met is the crux of the 2005 WHCoA. As important as the resolutions are, it can be fairly said that the implementation strategies for the resolutions are absolutely essential if these resolutions are to mean anything. This is the work of all delegates.

It is critical that we remain creative as well as realistic in our thinking and in the approaches we consider. We must deal with the world as it is even as we seek means to change that world for the better.

Once the votes are tallied tonight, WHCoA staff will work quickly to assign rooms in which the implementation strategy sessions will be held tomorrow.

You will be notified which resolutions made the top 50 and in which rooms the resolutions will be discussed tomorrow through screens in the hotel Registration area, on your hotel room television, and through a newsletter that will be available at the Conference registration area. We will also post them on the WHCoA website so that people not able to be here can see what we have chosen. And then we will get down to work.

We are asking a lot of you tomorrow. I am confident you will rise to the task. Throughout the day we will work to translate ideas into actions. Each implementation strategy session will be guided by a facilitator (along with issue experts) who will work with you to achieve the best consensus possible on the implementation strategies being developed.

This is the first WHCoA to have this strong a focus on developing realistic action plans to ensure that delegates' efforts are successful, and I am convinced that this is the best way to achieve our objectives. It is new and different, and I believe that in the end you will very proud of your contributions and the outcomes.

This process reflects our commitment to the premise that the accomplishments and contributions of this WHCoA will continue well beyond December 14, 2005 when the Conference formally ends.

And it also highlights the fact that we only have a short window of opportunity before the challenges we have been talking about for decades are here with us.

I know that some of you have been involved in previous WHCoA's – we may have veterans here from as far back as 1971 – maybe even 1961? To you I say thank you for your previous work. I ask that you draw upon your experiences to help make sure that what we commit to in this conference, comes to pass.

Our task is to shape the actions and activities, policies and policy changes that will improve the quality of life for millions of older Americans. In that effort, I hope we are guided by a philosophy of George Bernard Shaw, who said “Some people look at things that are and ask why. I dream of things that never were and ask why not.”

I cannot help but think of my Father, C. Colburn Hardy, to whom I have dedicated my personal efforts as Chairman of this Policy Committee. Many of you may

remember Coly Hardy. He participated in the '81 and '95 conferences from Florida. He was a professional volunteer older advocate, always had the courage of his convictions, always wanted to accomplish something and was a true visionary in every sense. His life's work and memory continues to guide me as I work to address my personal challenges,

Let me take a moment to touch on some of those challenges I have mentioned that affect many of us...and the opportunity we have to confront them.

We know that seven of every ten deaths in the U.S. are due to chronic diseases, and the number of Americans who suffer from diabetes, coronary heart disease, cancer and cognitive impairments is projected to increase 300% by 2049. That does not have to happen...and it simply can't!

We have the opportunity to educate the public about the importance of staying healthy throughout the lifespan so that we can all recognize our full potential as we age. That is why the WHCoA has focused on fitness, nutrition and health, issues I hope will be reflected in the Conference outcomes.

I want us to send a message that personal health is the responsibility of the individual person. And that in many cases, there are actions we must take now that will prevent or slow many chronic conditions affecting people now. We ALL know what causes obesity; we ALL know what a pedometer is for!

I don't know if you have had a chance to see Parade Magazine yesterday (hold up) which has a special section by Gail Sheehy called "Life begins at 60," which she calls the Second Adulthood."

Sheehy says that science tells us after our mid 50's, 70 percent of aging is controlled by our lifestyle.

Through and throughout the WHCoA, I want us to convey that there are things each of us can and MUST do now to improve our lives as we age. I saw some of you at yesterday's Healthy Living Celebration -- during which time we recognized several delegates for completing the President's Challenge or sharing their stories with us about lifestyle changes that have improved their health. We all need to be examples of healthy aging!

We also know that many boomers are not ready for their old age. Many are in denial that they will ever grow old...even as Chairman of this Conference I fall into that category. Many of us are just not equipped to care for an aging parent or spouse.

I became a caregiver for my Mother 3 days after I was appointed to Chair the Policy Committee. Many of you are also caregivers for your parents or

spouses...it often happens suddenly; it affects Baby Boomer women to a huge degree.

And despite our best efforts, information and support for caregivers, as I have found, is often not there or not enough. We need a national long term care strategy – a public private partnership-- that includes support for caregiving across the lifespan.

And there are other issues – where we will live, how will we get around, how we will remain active and engaged, what work and volunteer opportunities exist, what technologies are available to ensure that if we have a disability or chronic illness we are able to live independently – I hope you have had a chance to visit our exhibit hall which includes some demonstrations of some of the latest technologies that will us to become or remain independent as we age.

And there is the trillion dollar question — how will we fund our longevity? Will our savings and pensions carry us comfortably into what could be a third of our lives?

Are we knowledgeable enough about the financial aspects of retirement planning to have made or to make the right choices to guarantee our financial security?

These are only some of the issues that will impact the nation in the coming years. And again, while the WHCoA cannot tackle every issue, we are working to ensure that we address them through the resolutions that we identify as the most critical to our nation's needs – now and tomorrow.

Though the Conference report will be finalized in early Summer, I want our Implementation Strategies/Action Plans to be on the minds of ALL Americans beyond the day it is presented to the President and the Congress.

I want US to create a legacy that will endure. This Conference can be a Bully Pulpit for New ideas, and its outcome a Clarion Call for the need to plan now for a better future. We want to be able to say: “ We have some solutions that are fiscally responsible, bright, new...Listen to us! And Join Us!”

I would consider the WHCoA a huge success if we were to:

- Develop the foundation for a comprehensive, coordinated, affordable and accessible long term care policy or strategy that includes caregiving across the lifespan – one that is not solely the responsibility of the federal government.
- Begin a national call to action for “Healthy Aging, Healthy Living”

Launch an effort to integrate the delivery of systems and services at the state and local level that will facilitate aging in place as a positive experience.

Promote a national Public Awareness Campaign to educate the public about “Don’t Get Caught Off Guard” – to be prepared to fund their longevity - through savings, financial literacy or employment opportunities.

- Develop successful, innovative model programs that highlight the tremendous resource presented by baby boomers, and provides them with meaningful opportunities in every community so that they can continue their legacy of making a difference as they age.

I know each of you has your own thoughts and ideas on which resolutions you will select and what implementation strategies will be developed. I have seen quite a few buttons on lapels urging support for certain resolutions.

Once those resolutions are selected, I look forward to hearing you articulate your ideas and hopes in the form of innovative and attainable implementation strategies at the WHCoA.

I have every confidence that the 2005 WHCoA will be successful and will be logged into history books as a WHCoA that indeed HAD the **courage, integrity and innovation** to tackle the big issues in order to make a difference in the lives of millions of people in this country.

I don’t know which of the 73 resolutions you have before you will end up being among the fifty we will work to accomplish.

I do know that what we do here over the next three days will be vitally important to the future of this nation. I do know that the events of the next three days will mark the end of the beginning....and signify the beginning of an historic effort to reshape the way this great nation thinks about and deals with the aging process.

Let us, together, resolve to commit ourselves to making this Conference a resounding success.

Let us commit to ensuring that the efforts we have made, and the efforts we will make in the coming days and months, will create the dawning of a new era...an era in which America’s senior citizens are more respected, valued, cared for when needed and acknowledged as among the most vital assets this nation possesses.

Thank you. Your work is appreciated!



